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Discussing the Discipline

Religion After Globalization? Infrastructure, Planetarity, and the Fate of the Global

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ABSTRACT

Confidence in globalization is unraveling under the combined pressures of geopolitical realignment, infrastructural fragmentation, and ecological upheaval. These developments, together with conceptual critiques of the globalization paradigm, call for renewed scrutiny of the *global* as an analytical category in the study of religion. This article introduces a three-phase heuristic framework to examine how researchers from the 1980s onward have theorized *religion* in a global frame, tracing key developments and recurring oversights. Building on this discussion, I propose two conceptual reorientations: an *infrastructural approach* that foregrounds religion's socio-technical role in globalizing processes, and a *planetary perspective* that situates religion within broader socio-ecological entanglements. I argue that global frames remain valuable but demand critical engagement in light of shifting theoretical trajectories, as well as emerging dynamics of "deglobalization" and ecological disruption. In turn, I demonstrate that religion constitutes a vital site for rethinking the futures of the global and the planetary.

THE *global* has fallen on hard times. *Globalization*, the once-dominant paradigm for theorizing transboundary interconnectedness, has lost traction across the social sciences and humanities. Long-standing critiques of *globalization*'s conceptual coherence and Eurocentric bias now converge with emerging empirical developments—geopolitical realignment, infrastructural fragmentation, and human-influenced ecological disruption—to challenge what remains of its explanatory power. As supply chains falter, trade decoupling accelerates, and populist nationalisms intensify, many commentators are asking whether we have entered an era of partial or even reversing global interconnectedness—a moment of "deglobalization." Yet, even as

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proclamations of globalization's demise grow louder, the *global* persists as a key analytical frame in research on religion, albeit in ways that expose it to new vulnerabilities. Growing concerns about planetary entanglements and infrastructural fragilities—once peripheral to debates on globalization—now demand a rethinking of the *global* itself as an analytical category.

In this article, I revisit four decades of scholarship on religion in a global frame and argue that this lens requires fundamental reconceptualization to better address contemporary conceptual and empirical challenges. My analysis proceeds in two parts. First, I undertake a critical retrospective of dominant approaches and themes from the 1980s to the present, including many "classic" texts now consigned to library stacks—texts that researchers like me, trained from the 2010s onward, have typically encountered only secondhand. Situating these works within broader genealogies of scholarship reveals overlooked continuities and omissions, which in turn point to fresh avenues of inquiry and methodological innovation.[1] To structure this discussion, I introduce a heuristic framework that delineates three phases of scholarship on religion in a global frame, each characterized by distinct theoretical and methodological tendencies. These phases are not rigid; their boundaries are fuzzy, and intellectual influences do not always travel linearly between them.

In the second part of my analysis, I introduce two points of conceptual reorientation under the rubrics of *infrastructure* and *planetarity*. Drawing on my research into religious infrastructure and ecological dynamics, I argue that rethinking global frames through these categories offers critical insights into the mutually constitutive relationship between religion and emerging dynamics of transboundary entanglement and disarticulation. I also highlight how more materially grounded and ecologically attuned approaches might shape future research trajectories.

Before turning to the first part of my critical retrospective, it is important to clarify how I use *globalization* given its contested status in scholarly discourse (see Steger and James 2019). Although differences in precise interpretation remain, most researchers operate with a definition along the lines of Manfred Steger's: "The intensification of social relations and consciousness across world-time and world-space" (Steger 2020, 17). For the purposes of this article, I adopt this as a working definition while remaining attentive to alternative formulations.

GLOBALIZATION AND RELIGION

The first phase of literature on religion in a global frame (c. 1980–2000) was pioneered by Roland Robertson and Peter Beyer at a time when globalization research was still in its infancy.[2] Their work aimed to construct a systematic, "generalized theory" of globalization (Steger and James 2019, 71) and to pinpoint religion's role within it.[3] Accordingly, I label this phase *globalization and religion*. In what follows, I use Robertson and Beyer's contributions as a window onto broader debates during these years.

Glocalization

Roland Robertson was among the first theorists of globalization, defining it as "[both] the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole" (Robertson 1992, 8). Through this attentiveness to global imaginings, Robertson

[1] My retrospective differs from previous discussions (Carrette 2017; Csordas 2009; Dessì 2023; Roudometof 2016a; Wilkinson 2021) in three important ways. First, I consider global frames beyond globalization, allowing for engagement with *global* and *planetary* approaches. Second, I adopt a diachronic approach, enabling me to spotlight shifting intellectual developments. Third, I discuss *deglobalization*.

[2] For a genealogy of the *global* and *globalization*, see Steger and James 2019, 20–49.

[3] This is not the same as suggesting they adopt a "macro perspective" (Vásquez and Garbin 2016, 689), as Robertson clarifies (Robertson 1995, 25).

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challenged modernization-centric (Beck 1992; Giddens 1990), Marxian (Wallerstein 2007), and neoliberal (Friedman 2000) frameworks that privileged globalization's economic and political dimensions over its sociocultural aspects and that often conflated it with "Westernization." His contributions helped precipitate a "globalization turn" in the study of religion and in the social sciences and humanities more broadly.

Robertson favored "global consciousness" as a lens to demonstrate how religion mediates the ways that individuals and societies imagine and interpret their place in a globalizing world (see below). However, it is notable that Robertson's more enduring conceptualization of "glocalization" (*dochakuka*, 土着化)—a Japanese marketing buzzword—was prefigured by his earlier research on religion, particularly on how the "syncretistic" character of "Japanese religion" facilitates the selective incorporation and adaptation of global influences (Robertson 1987; 1995, 28).[4] Using this insight, Robertson rejected the notion of the *global* as an independent domain that exists "beyond all localities" (Robertson 1995, 35; see also Friedman 2013; Rossi 2015). Because globalization entails the "linking of localities," the global is necessarily constituted by the local. Correspondingly, ostensibly "local" realities are increasingly shaped by global influences. Even resistance to global forces routinely involves the (re)production and "standardization" of local cultural practices in accordance with "generalized recipes of locality" (Robertson 1995, 26, 30–31, 35; see also Appadurai 1995).

By framing the global and local as co-constitutive rather than oppositional, Robertson challenged then-dominant accounts (e.g., Barber 1995; Ritzer 1993) that portrayed globalization as a culturally homogenizing force erasing local difference (Robertson 1995, 33–34; see also Appadurai 1996; Escobar 2001; Tsing 2000; Turner 2001). His insights aligned with broader anthropological and postcolonial theories of the early 1990s that emphasized how global phenomena are "selectively incorporated" into local contexts, generating novel cultural forms (Robertson 1995, 41).[5]

Though somewhat unwieldly as a term, *glocalization* succinctly captures Robertson's central claim: globalization involves both homogenization and heterogenization, both "the particularization of the universal and the universalization of the particular" (Robertson 1992, 177–78; 1995, 27). As we will see, these insights remain foundational in the study of religion.

The Global Religious System

Peter Beyer's *Religion and Globalization* (1994) was the first book-length treatment of the relationship between religion and globalization. It advances two complementary arguments, both grounded in a structural-functionalist approach. My discussion of these arguments is necessarily more theoretically intricate than others presented in this article, given their conceptual density. Nevertheless, I have found it rewarding to give them closer attention than they are usually afforded in academic commentary, owing to the insight they offer into the trajectory of second-phase scholarship and their unexpected resonances with more recent theoretical developments.

The first of Beyer's arguments builds on his understanding of globalization as a process by which the structural forms associated with European modernity are institutionalized across the world.[6] He begins by identifying "functional differentiation" as the dominant structural principle of "Western society" from the late medieval period onward (Beyer 1994, 33–41; 2007a, 110). Drawing on Niklas Luhmann's systems theory, he defines functional

[4] For a book-length treatment of glocalization, see Roudometof 2016b.

[5] Related concepts include *creolization*, *hybridization*, *domestication*, *indigenization*, and *vernacularization* (Appadurai 1996; Bhabha 1994; Gilroy 1993; Hall 1990; Hannerz 1987; Nederveen Pieterse 1995). Whereas Beyer claims these concepts "say more or less the same thing" (Beyer 2022, 8), Robertson argues that hybridization is but one aspect of glocalization (Giulianotti and Robertson 2007; Roudometof 2013).

[6] This marks Beyer's departure from Roland Robertson's non-Eurocentric approach (Robertson 1992, 170).

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differentiation as the development of "distinct and yet interdependent social systems, each specializing in a different functional area" and governed by "its own [instrumental] rationality." Examples include "a capitalist economic system, a political system of sovereign states, an empirically based scientific system," and—crucially—a "religious system" (Beyer 2007a, 110). From the early modern period onward, these differentiated systems became vehicles for the expansion of European influence through the entangled imperatives of imperialism, commerce, Christian mission, and scientific exploration (Beyer 1994, 52–53; 2006, 73). However, the globalization of these "systemic power modalities" did not entail their simple diffusion across or imposition on non-European societies; the process was shaped by complex patterns of resistance, appropriation, and adaptation (i.e., glocalization) (Beyer 1994, 54; 2007a, 110).

For Beyer, these dynamics of non-European reception were integral to the formation of what became a global religious system (Beyer 2006, 75)—an insight that anticipates recent trends in global religious history (see below). Indeed, it was these very colonial encounters that generated the most distinctive characteristic of the religious function system besides its disarticulation from other systems: its internal "[segmentation] into 'traditions' or 'religions'" (Beyer 1994, 225; see Beyer 2006, chap. 2)—a point that resurfaces in Beyer's second argument. Thus, for Beyer, *religion*, as both concept and system, is "as much a product of globalization as it is a contributor to it" (Beyer 2006, 74).[7]

Fundamentalism

Beyer's second argument examines religion's public influence in an age of globalization. This question gained prominence in the 1980s and 1990s, as scholars grappled with what many saw as a "resurgence" of religion in public domains previously considered secular (Casanova 1994). This perception was informed by the rise of diverse "fundamentalist" movements after the 1979 Iranian revolution and the concurrent emergence of the new Christian Right in the United States (Beyer 2016, 258–59).[8] Analyzing these developments through the lens of globalization prompted renewed debates about secularization and modernity—debates that intensified further in the aftermath of 9/11.[9]

Beyer contributes to these debates by advancing a dual framework, conceptualizing *religion* both systemically (as a functionally specialized societal system) and culturally (as a mode of identification) (Beyer 1994, 67). On the systemic level, religion's influence "at the level of global society as a whole" has diminished, increasingly confined to the "restricted sphere of voluntary and individual belief and practice"—an argument otherwise known as "the privatization [of religion] thesis" (Beyer 1994, 12, 72). More than merely limiting religion's capacity to "[make] itself felt in other systems" (Beyer 2006, 103, 105), functional differentiation also subjects religion to what Roland Robertson calls "relativization" (Robertson 1992, 29). This is a process—brought into view by the intensification of "global consciousness" under globalization—in which a given sociocultural entity encounters unfamiliar sociocultural realities and is thrown into a wider "categorical context," compelling it to reflect on and adapt its own identity in relation to these other entities (Robertson and Chirico 1985, 234).[10] Beyer argues that religion has in fact undergone a *double relativization*: first, "religious concern" is now confined to a societal subsystem that is but one of many; and second, this

[7] See Beyer 2013 and 2020 and Casanova 2019 for updated histories.

[8] Beyer uses this (US Protestant-inflected) term for religious movements that "advocate the public enforcement of religious precepts or the exclusive religious identification of state collectivities" (Beyer 2007b, 452; 2016, 258).

[9] Scholars of globalization continue to frame religion in these terms. See, for example, Steger 2020, 120–23.

[10] On religious responses to relativization, see Campbell 2005 and Dessì 2017.

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subsystem is itself "internally differentiated into formally equal religions"—a structure emerging from the colonial encounters described in the previous subsection (Beyer 2007a, 112).

However, when viewed as a form of "socio-cultural particularism," religion's public influence can be seen to have *intensified* under globalization (i.e., the "deprivatization of religion" [Casanova 1994]). More specifically, by acting as a "cultural resource for *other* systems" (Beyer 1994, 72, my italics), religion can be made to address problems "generated elsewhere in the societal environment"—including those precipitated by globalization itself (Beyer 1994, 87, 90). Viewed from this "cultural" standpoint, Beyer argues, we can see that religion is bifurcating into "liberal" and "conservative" orientations (Beyer 1994, 93). Liberal religion aligns with globalization's "core values"—progress, inclusivism, universalism—and it accepts both functional differentiation and the relativization this entails (Beyer 1994, 93, 104, 144). Conservative religion, by contrast, is tradition oriented, exclusivist, and particularistic. It often seeks to introduce "religio-cultural themes" into other domains such as politics and law, and it may even attempt to "dedifferentiate" religion from other societal systems as a means of contesting its relativization (Beyer 1994, 93–94, 104, 144).

Many of Beyer's contemporaries joined him in framing conservative religion and "fundamentalist" movements as inherently opposed to globalizing (Western) modernity (e.g., Huntington 1996). Nevertheless, because conservative religion still addresses itself to problems generated by globalization—and indeed acquires public legitimacy and influence in doing so—Beyer does not consider it a mere "negation" of globalization but rather a "vital aspect" of it (Beyer 1994, 90; Beyer 2016, 259; see also Barber 1995; Lawrence 1989; Robertson 1992, 170, 178; Turner 2001). Thus, Beyer's second argument complements the first by reaffirming the interactive relationship between religion and globalization.

Overview

Thirteen years after his first monograph, Beyer observed that, despite the growing literature on *religion* and *globalization*, there remained little interest in "theorizing the relation between the two terms," with globalization typically framed as something to which religion "responds" rather than co-constitutes (Beyer 2007a, 109). This observation neatly encapsulates the two defining characteristics of the first-phase literature: first, its ambition to construct a systematic theory of globalization; and second, its preoccupation with the question of whether religion is a reactive or constitutive force in shaping global structures and imaginaries. Given that the shortcomings of the first phase are extensively catalogued in the second-phase literature, I will address them in the next section.

GLOBALIZATION OF RELIGION

The second-phase literature emerged around the turn of the millennium, reaching full maturity by the mid-2000s but remaining active into the 2010s. Unlike the first phase, which sought to develop systematized theoretical frameworks, the second phase prioritized empirical studies of the differentiated currents and modalities through which religion becomes "globalized" and participates in "globalizing processes." As such, religion's integral role in globalization was now largely taken for granted. However, in contrast to Robertson's emphasis on how religion mediates dynamics of global consciousness and relativization, and Beyer's focus on the structural reconfiguration and shifting public influence of religion, second-phase scholars concentrated more on how religious ideas, practices, and organizations are transformed through intensified global circulations (Csordas 2009, 3; Juergensmeyer 2003, 5). This shift is succinctly captured by Thomas J. Csordas's call for researchers to set aside the formulation

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"religion and globalization" in favor of "the globalization of religion" (Csordas 2009, 2). Yet, within this reoriented subfield, disagreements persisted over whether these processes produced greater homogenization or heterogenization. For this reason, Robertson's concept of *glocalization* remained a key reference point, with Beyer himself arguing that "glocalized religious pluralization" should become the central focus of research at this nexus (Beyer 2007a, 99, 112–13).[11] In what follows, I identify four distinctive shifts in the second-phase literature that redefined the analytical interface between religion and globalization.

Multiple Globalizations

The second-phase literature emerged within a broader "globalization turn" in the social sciences and humanities from the late 1990s, a period when neoliberal globalization was truly beginning to hit its stride. Where first-phase scholars like Peter Beyer had positioned their work against the backdrop of long-standing debates on modernity and secularization, second-phase researchers increasingly distanced themselves from these categories, adopting globalization as a primary analytical lens (cf. Dawson 2014a; 2014b). This shift was influenced not only by the growing conceptual prominence of *globalization* but also by widespread critiques of modernization and secularization theories. Scholars challenged the Eurocentric, teleological, and universalizing assumptions of these paradigms, prompting a move away from frameworks that privileged globalization's relationship with European (or Western) modernity (see Hobson 2020).

For some, echoing "skeptical" perspectives on globalization (Martell 2017, 14–27), the notion of *globalization* itself was already irredeemable—a mere synonym for Western modernity and free-market capitalism (see my discussion of planetarity below). Others, however, saw global frames as tools for challenging Eurocentric models, joining "transformationalist" theorists (Martell 2017, 16–27) in developing more longue durée, polycentric accounts of globalization that emphasize multiple and differentiated globalizing dynamics and regimes.

In the study of religion, some scholars echoed work on "multiple modernities" (Eisenstadt 2000) and "alternative globalisations" (Escobar 2004) by conceptualizing religious globalization in the plural (Berger and Huntington 2002). Others continued to use *globalization* in the singular with the caveat that it should not be regarded as a "mechanical, totalizing process, but a polyvalent phenomenon that has differential effects" (Vásquez and Marquardt 2000, 139; Carrette 2017, 614). In both cases, scholars of religion actively helped to consolidate the shift toward more pluralized and historically situated understandings of globalization.

Specialization

The second major shift in second-phase scholarship concerns the increasing specialization of the subfield. The 9/11 attacks and their aftermath ensured that debates about Islamic "fundamentalism" remained on the agendas of scholars of both religion and globalization throughout the 2000s. However, as the subfield matured and gained visibility, researchers expanded their scope to include a much broader range of religious movements, including those ostensibly more receptive to globalization.

The paradigmatic case was Pentecostal Christianity, routinely identified as one of the world's fastest-growing religious movements. Researchers have offered multiple explanations for Pentecostalism's rapid globalization. One highlights how the imaginaries, behaviors, and organizational forms that it promotes share an elective affinity with global capitalist logics (Kirby 2019). Another emphasizes its "portability"—the capacity for Pentecostal beliefs and practices to be detached from specific cultural contexts and re-embedded elsewhere

[11] Beyer has since reaffirmed the importance of secularization and systems theories (Beyer 2021).

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without being entirely "denatured" (Csordas 2009, 4–5). Others focus on Pentecostalism's tendency to *glocalize* with local traditions while simultaneously demonizing them under the rubric of "spiritual warfare" (Martin 2002; Meyer 1998).

In general, as Peter Beyer observes, second-phase scholarship continued to privilege "world religions" such as Christianity and Islam (Beyer 2007b, 455–56). However, researchers began to attend more closely to the globalization of fluid, "non-institutional" forms of religion and "spirituality" that challenge rigid taxonomies (Beyer 2007a, 102–3). Attention also turned to the globalization of "Indigenous" or "traditional" religions that have historically been denied recognition as religions or confined to the category of the *local* (Beyer 2007a, 103).

Another major axis of second-phase specialization concerns different modalities of religious globalization, giving rise to now well-established subfields such as religion and development, media, pilgrimage, and tourism. The most extensively studied modality has been migration and diaspora. Formative research by Peggy Levitt demonstrated that religious ideas, practices, and organizations play a crucial role in facilitating migrants' practices of settlement and integration (e.g., by offering access to social capital and safety nets, notions of identity and belonging, and platforms for public recognition and claims-making), as well as efforts to foster transnational connections—both real and imagined—with sending contexts and diasporic networks (Levitt 2001, 2007; Roudometof 2014). In turn, migrant religious identities and practices undergo glocalization, not only transforming host societies but also sending contexts (Beyer 2007b, 449).

Deterritorialized Flows

A third key shift in second-phase scholarship was the uptake of new conceptual tools attuned to the dynamism of globalized religion. One influential example was Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's notion of "deterritorialization," which gained considerable traction in globalization theory during the 2000s (Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Steger and Wahlrab 2017, 124–32). Scholars of religion invoked the concept to capture how globalization disembeds religion from specific geographies—particularly nation-states—and their respective socio-cultural particularities.[12] A paradigmatic example is Olivier Roy's account of Islam's deterritorialization (Roy 2004). He argues that Muslim migration and (social engagement with) the "westernisation" of the "traditional Muslim world" have caused Islam to become "less ascribed to a specific territory," leading to its "deculturation" and "homogenisation" (Roy 2004, 18–20, 108, 270). This process, Roy contends, has made possible a shared sense of identity and imagined community shared among Muslims around the world and articulated through the notion of *ummah* (Roy 2004, 44). This ideal, Roy proposes, resonates powerfully with "floating and mobile" populations of "resettled migrants," "neofundamentalists," and a "cosmopolitan intelligentsia" (Roy 2004, 104).

Another prominent theorist in this vein is Arjun Appadurai, who conceptualizes deterritorialized flows as increasingly fluid movements of "cultural material" across national boundaries (Appadurai 1996, 33, 46). His famous five "scapes" of "global cultural flow"—*ethnoscapes* (flows of people), *technoscapes* (technological arrangements), *finanscapes* (capital), *mediascapes* (media outlets, devices, and content), and *ideoscapes* (ideas and ideologies)—offer a framework for understanding the differentiated and multi-directional nature of globalized cultural dynamics (Appadurai 1996, 33, 45–46). The popularity of the "flow" concept in second-phase scholarship reflected a broader shift in the social sciences and humanities away from static structural models toward more processual, fluid conceptions of social change (Rey and Ritzer 2010, 261–66).[13]

[12] Deleuze and Guattari themselves apply the concept to *religion* (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 383–84).
[13] Despite this, Appadurai's *scapes* perform a heuristic function akin to Beyer's differentiated systems.

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One scholar who applied Appaduraian frameworks to religion was Thomas A. Tweed with his work on Cuban-American Catholic practices of devotion and mobility (Tweed 1997). His book *Crossing and Dwelling* champions "flow" and other "aquatic" metaphors as devices for understanding the mobility and dynamism of religion and religious communities—both with respect to entanglements between different religious traditions as well as religion's relationship with other domains such as "economy, society, and politics" (Tweed 2006, 59–60). This emphasis on mixity offered an important counterpoint to Roy's account of globalization-as-homogenization.

A natural move for scholars working with Appaduraian concepts was to theorize religion as a discrete channel of global flow. For instance, Tweed coins the term "sacroscapes" to describe global religious flows and the "traces" they leave on lives and places (Tweed 2006, 61–62). Similarly, Mark Hulsether (1997, 139) and Elizabeth McAlister (2005, 251) offer "religioscapes" to describe "subjective religious maps [. . .] of immigrant, or diasporic, or transnational communities who are also in global flow and flux" (McAlister 2005, 251). Although conceptually appealing, I find these "scape" frameworks have limited analytical purchase. By treating religion as a discrete channel of flow, they risk detaching it from other globalizing forces, thereby weakening the analytical utility of hydraulic concepts for highlighting religion's imbrication with economic, social, and political domains (see also Carrette 2017, 620–21).

Reterritorialized Lives

The final shift in second-phase scholarship that I examine stands in direct tension with the previous one, emphasizing "reterritorialization"—the processes by which deterritorialized (religious) flows become *re*-embedded in localized spaces and socio-cultural contexts (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 303). An early but compelling account comes from Manuel A. Vásquez and Marie F. Marquardt, who investigate a Marian apparition in Clearwater, Florida (USA) (Vásquez and Marquardt 2000). Their study delineates the glocalizing forces shaping the apparition milieu, including Clearwater's emergence as a global pilgrimage destination; the founding of a local church catering to Spanish-speaking migrant communities; the influence of international organizations on local interpretations of the apparition; the role of media platforms as arenas for disseminating and contesting the apparition's meaning; and the formation of a transnational devotional community centered on this event.

From this multi-layered perspective, Vásquez and Marquardt demonstrate how religion operates simultaneously at local and global levels through processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, thereby avoiding an undue emphasis on either pole of the binary (Vásquez and Marquardt 2000, 139; see also Dawson 2014a; Srinivas 2010). Although this argument overlaps with Robertson's account of *glocalization*, it extends his primarily cultural analysis by incorporating spatial and material dimensions. More specifically, Vásquez and Marquardt highlight how overstating dynamics of unbounded flow and mixity can obscure the social productivity of structures, borders, and uneven mobility regimes (Vásquez and Marquardt 2003, 62, 90; see also Vásquez 2009b).[14]

In their conclusion, Vásquez and Marquardt extend this argument into a broader critique of research on religion and globalization. Although acknowledging the contributions of first-phase scholars like Beyer and Robertson, they critique their "overly abstract and theoretical" approach, as well as those of second-phase researchers who focus on deterritorialized flows (Vásquez and Marquardt 2000, 139–40). Similarly, Levitt argues that such "largely theoretical

[14] Tweed has recently echoed this concern, proposing that "flows" should be paired with "dams" to capture "compelled and constrained crossings" (Tweed 2020, 22–23). See also Rockefeller 2011 and Stein 2017, 47. Vásquez offers networks, fields, and regimes as alternative lenses (Vásquez 2008, 2009a, 2011).

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accounts tell us little about how religion is actually lived, [overlooking] the people actually doing the globalizing" (Levitt 2006). Together, these scholars advocate for empirically "thicker" approaches that foreground lived experiences and materialities "from below" (Vásquez and Marquardt 2003, 51; see Tudoroiu 2023).

This call for grounded analysis was likely influenced by emerging research on *lived religion* (Hall 1997) and *material religion* (McDannell 1995). It also resonated with parallel trends in anthropology, particularly Anna Tsing's early work on the situated, contested, and heterogenous character of global connections as they are forged and negotiated through struggles between diverse and unequal actors (Tsing 2000, 2005, 2009; see my discussion of infrastructure below). In this regard, Vásquez and Marquardt's work on reterritorialization and lived religion forms part of a broader "grounded globalization" literature (Burawoy 2000).

Overview

In the second-phase literature, concepts of modernity and secularization—central to the first phase—gave way to new analytical models. Rather than theorizing the structural relationship between globalization and religion, researchers shifted focus to the globalization of religion and its diverse, transformative effects. They increasingly specialized in particular movements and modalities of religious globalization. In place of structural and systemic models, many scholars emphasized deterritorialization, flow, and mixity. Others adopted more "grounded" approaches, attending to how different religious practitioners navigate and actively shape globalizing processes within their everyday lives. This tension between deterritorialization and reterritorialization partly overlapped with ongoing debates over whether globalization processes are primarily homogenizing or heterogenizing, with Robertson's notion of *glocalization* remaining an important touchstone.

Recently, Rebecca Catto observed that "there has been little theoretical development in terms of religion and globalization since [the 2000s]" (Catto 2021, 149). I would go further: by the time that Vásquez and Marquardt published their influential article (Vásquez and Marquardt 2000), the core themes and methodologies of the second phase had already crystallized. While *glocalization* remained a powerful analytical lens, Vásquez and Marquardt demonstrated that its emphasis on cultural flows left material and structural dynamics underexplored. The next section examines the stagnation of this research trajectory and demonstrates how addressing these unresolved gaps could open new directions of inquiry.

GLOBAL RELIGION

Prefigured by research in the 2000s but only consolidating in the early-to-mid 2010s, the third-phase literature is marked by the waning popularity of *globalization* as a framing concept.[15] This shift reflects more than conceptual fatigue or the fragmentation of the cohesive globalization of religion subfield due to increasing specialization; it is also tied to deeper theoretical and empirical challenges.

As we have seen, "skeptical" critiques of globalization from the second phase had already cast doubt on the concept's utility, portraying it as monolithic, unidirectional, inevitable, irreversible, evenly distributed, and deeply intertwined with Western modernity and neoliberal capitalism (Martell 2017, 14–27). These critiques have gained momentum in light of recent geopolitical and economic developments—particularly the economic fragmentation and increasingly restrictive bordering that have followed the 2007–2008 global financial crisis.

[15] Google Books Ngram Viewer indicates that usage of the term peaked in 2006, with 2022 levels dipping to 2001 figures.

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Such shifts have starkly underscored that global interconnectivity is neither guaranteed nor irreversible, strengthening doubts about *globalization*'s continued analytical productivity.

Rallying in defense of the concept, Manfred Steger and Paul James contend that globalization has not reversed but rather *coexists with* dynamics of deglobalization (Steger and James 2019, 254–56).[16] In doing so, they highlight the continued intensification of "disembodied globalization"—the digitally mediated, transnational circulation of images, texts, cryptocurrencies, and so forth. Although their caution in declaring the demise of globalization is well considered, I see little reason to treat digital worlds as exceptions. In an era when critical infrastructure faces mounting geopolitical threats, digital platforms are subject to widespread government censorship, and online spaces become increasingly fragmented by algorithmic bubbles, it is clear that digital flows remain deeply embedded in social and technical (infra)-structures—and are thus no less contingent or vulnerable than their "physical" counterparts.

This elicits a fundamental question: if disarticulation and fragmentation (have) come to represent the predominant global trajectory, does *globalization* remain a meaningful analytical category? Even "transformationalist" rehabilitations of the concept implicitly assume an overarching trend toward intensification (Martell 2017, 16–27). If this assumption no longer holds, the term risks becoming analytically redundant.[17] Consequently, many researchers now prefer to speak of "globalizing processes" or "global entanglements" (see below), which, rather than defining overarching conditions, enable analysis of specific dynamics of intensified (dis)connection that increasingly mark contemporary global configurations.

From Globalization to Global

This conceptual shift is particularly evident in the study of religion, where the declining analytical currency of *globalization* has coincided with a rise in the use of *global* as a framing device. The trend is most evident in "religion and" research (e.g., religion and "global society," "global development," "global politics"), as well as in the growing tendency to situate entire traditions, movements, or identities within a global frame. What began in the second-phase literature with references to "global Judaism" (Cooper 2012), "global Salafism" (Meijer 2009), and (most ubiquitously) "global Pentecostalism" (Miller and Yamamori 2007) has now expanded into an academic landscape where *global* has become an established and widely adopted framing in titles—from global Catholicism (Tausch and Obirek 2019) and global Eastern Orthodoxy (Giordan and Zrinščak 2020) to global Mormonism (Shepherd, Shepherd and Cragun 2020) and global Sufism (Piranio and Sedgwick 2019).

At first blush, *global* here might appear to be a mere euphemism for *globalization*—a means of disavowing high-modern globalization theories while continuing to signal that one is engaging with consequential transnational issues. However, on closer inspection, the transition from globalization to global marks a broader conceptual reorientation that emphasizes more fluid, polycentric, and context-sensitive approaches to religious formations.

A key figure in this transition is Mark Juergensmeyer, whose work has significantly popularized the global prefix in the study of religion (Juergensmeyer 2003; Juergensmeyer and Roof 2012).[18] Not coincidentally, he is also a leading figure in global studies.[19] Juergensmeyer describes "the study of global religion" as an effort to "understand not only the diversity of religious traditions over time and space but also the shifting idea of religion

[16] Many commentators prefer terms such as "reglobalization" and "regionalization," which avoid framing the (potential) decline of the post-1945 international order as a wholesale retreat of globalization.

[17] If this argument holds, it still seems coherent to speak of, say, "the globalization of Wicca," where the term refers to specific processes of circulation and transformation rather than a general condition.

[18] On *global religion* and *world religion*, see Berner 2008 and Carrette 2017.

[19] On *globalization* and *global studies*, see Steger and James 2019, 175–78.

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itself"—a matter I return to shortly. "Ultimately," he argues, "the study of global religion requires an intellectual stance that is itself global in its outlook and multicultural in its diversity of worldviews" (Juergensmeyer 2012, 462). In other words, "global religion" is less a subfield focused on religion's relationship to globalization and more an "intellectual stance"—one that builds on second-phase critiques of globalization by emphasizing plurality, hybridity, and transnational perspectives.

I argue that something has been lost in the field's shift in emphasis from *globalization* to *global*. My concern echoes Jeremy Carrette's complaint that by abandoning "complex globalization theory," Juergensmeyer forfeits critical "sociopolitical-economic analysis," allowing *global* to function as a seemingly neutral "contextual frame" for "empirical sampling" (Carrette 2017, 620–21). This maneuver flattens the concept, obscuring the political and sociotechnical work involved in producing globalizing processes that enable religion's very circulation and reconfiguration—precisely the dynamics that second-phase scholars advocating "grounded" perspectives "from below" sought to illuminate. Such a perspective is arguably even more crucial in an era marked by global processes of disarticulation and reordering—processes that a purely descriptive notion of *global* is ill-equipped to explain. I return to this concern below.

Reflexive Accounts of Global Religion

Another factor bolstering the popularity of the *global* in the study of religion is the influence of global history, a field closely aligned with global studies.[20] Notable contributions in this vein include Nile Green's work on "global Islam" (Green 2020) and the emerging literature on "global religious history" (GRH) (Maltese and Strube 2021; Rota and Kirsch 2024; Strube 2024). As Giovanni Maltese and Julian Strube explain, GRH foregrounds *global entanglements* to better understand historical developments, explore how this understanding is shaped by situated processes of knowledge production, and challenge methodological nationalism and Eurocentrism (Maltese and Strube 2021, 234–35; see also Meyer 2020a, 2020b). *Global entanglement*, as defined here, refers to a rhizomatic "interaction or relationality between discursive elements or signifiers (verbal or non-verbal) [. . .] over long distances [and] boundaries" (Maltese and Strube 2021, 235–38). In contrast to the language of "(inter)connections" found in globalization theories—which implies linear, neutral ties and unbounded flows—I find *entanglements* better suited to describing messy webs of relation marked by asymmetries of power, frictive processes of interdependence, and unintended yet enduring consequences.

Although GRH shares continuities with second-phase literature, especially in its emphasis on fluid transboundary relations and localized agency, it marks a departure in two key respects. First, GRH expands its analytical scope to include pre–twentieth-century histories of global religious entanglement, a subject largely neglected in favor of contemporary dynamics (Roudometof 2014). Second, it introduces a reflexive critique of hegemonic global discourses that shape scholarly conceptions of religion, reinforcing gendered and racialized power asymmetries (Maltese 2023; Maltese and Strube 2021, 236–37). At the heart of this critique is the rejection of sui generis theories of religion that treat *religion* as a discrete and universal category. Instead, GRH follows Michael Bergunder's poststructuralist argument that *religion* must be understood as a historically contingent, discursively produced, and fundamentally global category (Bergunder 2014; see also Haustein 2021; Kollmar-Paulenz 2013; Suarsana 2021).[21]

[20] Useful introductions include Conrad 2016 and Wenzlhuemer 2020.

[21] This builds on an earlier generation of critical, genealogical, and reflexive scholarship on religion, to which Beyer also contributes (Beyer 1994; Asad 1993; Chidester 1996; Masuzawa 2005; McCutcheon 1997; Smith 1993).

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Michael Wilkinson and Jörg Haustein echo the reflexive orientation of GRH but go further by turning this lens toward the use of *global* itself as a classificatory term within the study of religion (Wilkinson and Haustein 2023). Their analysis of "global Pentecostalism"—discussed above—shows how this category is actively produced through statistical classifications and narratives shaped by transnational religious networks as well as Western academic institutions. These actors play a decisive role in determining what counts as "Pentecostal" globally, privileging specific theological and organizational forms—for instance, the "prosperity gospel"—while marginalizing others (Wilkinson and Haustein 2023, 1–2). This process generates an image of Pentecostalism as a coherent, unified, and denomination-like movement, obscuring its fluid, fragmented, and heterogenous character across different contexts (Wilkinson and Haustein 2023, 5). Wilkinson and Haustein ultimately call for a renewed emphasis on "heterogeneous flows" (Wilkinson and Haustein 2023, 1), aligning with the concerns of many second-phase scholars.

Whereas Wilkinson and Haustein employ a reflexive approach to examine how religious actors help shape the production of global categories, Jørn Borup applies the same lens to explore how they may also *contest* such classifications (Borup 2021). Borup examines emic Buddhist discourses in Asian and North American contexts that express what he calls "post-global" sentiments (Borup 2021, 9). He shows that North American Buddhist groups increasingly reject the ostensibly "universal" category of "global Buddhism," exposing it instead as a particularized form of commercialized, "middle- and upper-class, white Buddhism" (Borup 2021, 9). These groups advocate for a "re-culturalized" Buddhism that foregrounds ethnic and racial identities (Borup 2021, 9–10). Borup's concept of "post-global Buddhism" invites reflection on whether global frames—even when attuned to heterogeneity—can fully accommodate religious formations that explicitly reject them in favor of localized, intersectional particularities, especially at a moment when discourses of "deglobalization" and "reglobalization" are gaining renewed prominence across diverse contexts. Simultaneously, we know from first-phase scholarship that localized expressions of resistance toward global universalizing dynamics are far from new. Moreover, when reflecting on such cases, we should recall Roland Robertson's decades-old observation that ostensibly "local" practices of resistance routinely follow globalized "recipes of locality"—an insight that brings us all the way back to *glocalization* (Robertson 1995, 26).

Before concluding my retrospective, I would like to briefly return to GRH's laudable aim of staging a genealogical critique of discursive practices, both verbal and otherwise (Maltese and Strube 2021, 236).[22] Although Michael Bergunder maintains that GRH is not exclusively preoccupied with the "conceptual history of 'religion'" (Bergunder 2021, 442), I note that most contributions to the three aforementioned special issues, compelling though they are, remain focused on shifting "meanings of religion" and other salient "names" such as "'modernity,' 'West,' 'Hinduism,' 'witchcraft,' etc." (Maltese and Strube 2021, 232, 247; cf. Bachmann 2024; Haustein 2021; Triplett 2024). This poststructuralist orientation mirrors a broader discursive turn in globalization theory (Martell 2017, 27–31) but stands in sharp contrast to second-phase scholars of religion like Manuel Vásquez and Peggy Levitt who foreground embodied experiences, social practices, and materiality (Hazard 2013). Indeed, it is for this reason that Judith Bachmann critiques GRH for its "logocentric" (and therefore "Eurocentric") outlook (Bachmann 2024, 134). To be sure, GRH's focus on entangled histories constitutes an important methodological advance. However, there remains a risk that it affords too much analytical weight to discursive elements. Addressing this limitation, I argue, requires a broader

[22] Translation is central to GRH because categories like *religion* are always mediated—and semantically transformed—through "translingual practice" (Bachmann 2024; Herrmann 2018).

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conceptualization of global entanglements—one that retains GRH's critical attention to discursive politics while affording equal analytical weight to the material, technical, and even ecological dimensions of religion's participation in globalizing dynamics.

Overview

If the first-phase literature explored the structural relationship between religion and globalization and the second examined how religion is concretely transformed through its globalization, then the third adopts a more critical orientation toward both global(ization) and religious categories. Many third-phase researchers use *global* as a rubric to advance reflexive approaches that foreground the polycentric, contested, and situated production of religious discourses across extended spatial and temporal horizons. Yet, some recent scholarship turns this reflexive lens onto "global" classifications themselves, revealing them not as neutral descriptors but as political constructs that actively shape, legitimize, and universalize certain religious formations while rendering others invisible or marginal. Moreover, although frameworks such as "global religion" and "global religious history" have broadened the field's analytical horizons, they frequently privilege conceptual, discursive, and epistemic dynamics. As a result, they risk obscuring the material and technical dimensions of religion's global (re)-entanglements. This is one of two issues that I address in the final section.

CONCEPTUAL REORIENTATION

In what follows, I discuss two points of conceptual reorientation for future research on religion in a global frame. I address these under the conceptual rubrics of *infrastructure* and *planetarity*.

Thinking Infrastructurally

In many global contexts, recent events—including COVID-19, geopolitical tensions, and extreme weather incidents—have drawn greater attention to the contingent infrastructures that subtend people's lives and movements, from pipelines and supply chain networks to data centers and border control facilities. Concurrently, scholarship on global infrastructure, logistics, and supply chains has expanded across the social sciences and humanities (Carse et al. 2023; Chua et al. 2018; Knox and Gambino 2023). This research resonates with "grounded globalization" critiques of abstract notions of unbridled "flow," foregrounding instead the material conduits, human labor, and contested relations that constitute global entanglements (see also Larkin 2004; Tsing 2000, 2005). Building on these insights, scholars have shown that infrastructures do not only enable and circulate; they also reproduce power asymmetries, facilitating some movements while obstructing others (Tonkiss 2015). More recent work has demonstrated that infrastructures are continuously enacted—and indeed constituted—through ensembles of embodied practices, cultural repertoires, and specialized knowledge (Kirby 2024, 97–99). The affective charge of infrastructural configurations—whether gleaming, dilapidated, or deferred—further attests, albeit in a different register, to their sensory and semiotic composition and operations (Appel et al. 2018). Attending to infrastructure, then, clarifies how global entanglements materialize as asymmetrical, friction-laden, and path-dependent relations. As socio-technical arrangements, infrastructures both enact and embody these relations by actively configuring the distribution and sedimentation of power, labor, affect, and meaning across space (Harvey et al. 2017).

Until recently, studies of religion and globalization have largely bypassed the literature on infrastructure. Across all three phases discussed above, scholars have overwhelmingly emphasized the globalization of religious ideas, meanings, and discourses while neglecting questions

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of materiality and practice.[23] As Cristina Rocha notes, these literatures have scarcely engaged with *material religion* (Rocha 2020), a subfield that challenges the long-standing neglect of religion's physical, technical, embodied, and spatial dimensions (Narayanan 2020; Tamimi et al. 2024). Whereas *material religion* only gained momentum in the 2010s—just as the second-phase literature started to wane—the continued disinterest in this agenda among third-phase researchers remains striking (Bachmann 2024).[24]

Emerging research on *religious infrastructure* offers a promising avenue for bridging this gap (Hoelzchen and Kirby 2024).[25] This agenda can help draw attention to the infrastructure of religious globalization—the very socio-technical arrangements that enable the global mobility and reconfiguration of religious practices, imaginaries, and materialities. In the existing literature, researchers of religion and media have come closest to addressing these matters. For instance, Brian Larkin highlights how infrastructures mediate religious ideas in ways that have a significant influence on the formation of religious networks in northern Nigeria (Larkin 2004).

A less obvious but equally important question concerns how religious practices and arrangements actively participate in the socio-technical work that makes global mobility and interaction possible more generally—including ostensibly "secular" forms of economic and cultural circulation. Second-phase scholarship largely treated religion as an object of globalization or as a discrete global flow but rarely asked how religion might act as an enabling condition for broader globalizing processes.[26] Roland Robertson and Peter Beyer came close to this insight by framing religion as not just "reactive" but a "critical ingredient' or "vital aspect" of globalization (Robertson 1987, 36; Robertson 1992, 87; Beyer 2016, 259). However, by implicitly compartmentalizing religion within the domain of "cultural" globalization, they reinforced its conceptual separation from political and economic globalization (cf. Robertson 2022, 179).

A handful of publications illustrate the potential of a research agenda focused on the religious infrastructure of globalization. For instance, three key studies have demonstrated how Sufi and Pentecostal practices and spaces function as infrastructures of global mobility and habitation for migrant communities in Istanbul, Jeddah, and Rio de Janeiro who face conditions of precarity and exclusion (Heck 2016; Heil 2021; Simone 2001). Elsewhere, Jenna Supp-Montgomerie's monograph on the first transatlantic telegraph explores how, through the endeavors of US Protestant missions, this infrastructure became imbued with religious meanings—entanglements that continue to influence contemporary conceptions of networks as systems of global connectivity (Supp-Montgomerie 2021). These studies gesture toward a broader conceptual shift facilitated by the lens of *religious infrastructure*: rather than viewing religion as a passive, reactive, or primarily "cultural" participant in globalizing processes, it should also be understood as an active socio-technical agency—an infrastructure—that enables, sustains, and shapes global entanglements more broadly.

At a time when the future of "the global" appears increasingly uncertain, infrastructure offers a crucial lens for understanding emerging dynamics of fragmentation and reordering—including for scholars interested in how these processes intersect with religion. Infrastructures and supply

[23] Second-phase researchers like Vásquez and Marquardt acknowledged the constraining influence of structures and borders but were focused on religious organizations, embodied practices, and lived experiences as opposed to socio-technical systems. See, for example, Vásquez and Marquardt 2003.

[24] This is also because scholars outside of the study of religion continue to frame religion as a primarily (reactionary) ideological force. See, for example, Steger and James 2019, 89.

[25] Religious infrastructures are socio-technical enabling arrangements that are religiously marked or that enable religiously marked practices and relations (Kirby 2024).

[26] This echoes research on the religion(s) *of* or *in* globalization (Beckford 2010; Hopkins et al. 2001; Strenski 2004) and globalization *as* religion (Csordas 2009, 9–10), though these contributions share an ideational-discursive focus.

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chains are paradigmatic globalized forms, simultaneously emblematic and constitutive of global entanglements.

Examining how religious infrastructures regulate access to resources, mobility, and opportunity also raises broader questions about the production of conditions of habitability and "life support" (Farías and Blok 2016, 18). As recent scholarship has demonstrated, infrastructures are entangled with ecological as well as socio-technical processes that both enable and constrain their operations in ways that exceed human intentions (Barua 2021; Hetherington 2019; Rippa 2024; Tsing et al. 2024). Accordingly, an infrastructural perspective extends into questions of planetary habitability, a theme I take up in the final subsection.

Religion in a Planetary Frame

Whereas the *global* remains a salient framing concept in the study of religion, elsewhere the *planetary* has increasingly been advanced as a critical alternative.[27] Gayatri Spivak prefigured this incipient "planetary turn" with her reflections on *planetarity* (Spivak 2003), later considerably expanded by Dipesh Chakrabarty (2021) and Amy J. Elias and Christian Moraru (2015). In keeping with many "skeptical" accounts of *globalization*, planetary theorists argue that the *global* is inextricable from European imperialism, modernity, and capitalism—it is a "financial-technocratic system" geared toward homogenization and control (Chakrabarty 2021, 204; Elias and Moraru 2015, xvi; Moraru 2022, 111–12; Spivak 2003, 72–73). They distinguish the *planetary* from the *global* in three ways:

1. *Multiplicity*: Whereas the globe is often envisioned as a singular, enclosed, hierarchically ordered, fully realized "totality," the planet is a shifting, open-ended plurality of co-present worlds or "patches" whose workings exceed human comprehension (Moraru 2022; Spivak 2003; Tsing et al. 2024).
2. *Ecologies*: Whereas globalization typically treats the globe as a resource or object of domination, planetary thinking views the planet as a web of ecologies that we inhabit, bear ethical responsibility for, and are co-constituted by through our partial and situated entanglements with human and nonhuman others (Bauman 2014, 116; Chakrabarty 2021, 209; Elias and Moraru 2015, xii; Spivak 2003, 72).[28]
3. *Anthropocentrism*: Whereas the globe is conceptualized in relation to human history and action, planetary thinking challenges human exceptionalism, highlighting the "feral" agency of nonhuman forces and entities over much more extended timescales ("deep time") as they comingle with capitalist processes, transforming the composition of the planet in ways that do not necessarily align with human interests (Chakrabarty 2021, 57, 71, 83, 90; Connolly 2017, 4; Tsing et al. 2024, 10).

Besides echoing third-phase concerns regarding multiplicity and relationality, planetary thinking clearly offers a valuable lens into questions heretofore neglected by scholarship on religion in a global frame concerning dynamics of human-nonhuman entanglement, thereby facilitating engagement with the well-established subfield of religion, nature, and ecology. However, planetary critiques of the *global* are highly dependent on "skeptical" assessments of *globalization*. As discussed earlier, these have long been countered by more contingent, polycentric, and open-ended accounts. Additionally, it remains unclear whether the *planetary*

[27] Other (sometimes overlapping) concepts have been tabled, including earth/Earth, Gaia, *monde*/*mondialisation*, *terre*/terrestrial, world(s)/worlding (Elias and Moraru 2015; Labrosse and Mahiet 2023). A resurgent discourse on space colonization has also lent fresh salience to the notion of "the interplanetary."

[28] For recent debates regarding the global as an ostensible viewpoint "from nowhere," see Howles 2018, 172–87; Lazier 2011; Sloterdijk 2014.

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necessarily offers a more effective framework for pluralistic thinking. Some researchers even contend that planetary discourse carries—together with neighboring concepts like the *Anthropocene*—the same totalizing tendencies as the *global*, as encapsulated by representations of "the planet" as a monolithic whole inhabited by an undifferentiated "humanity" (Giles 2015; Haraway 2016, 48–50; Latour 2017; Maltese and Strube 2021, 234; Tsing et al. 2024, 23–35). Of course, the planetary scale is important to think with, particularly because it enables us to describe transregional phenomena such as climate change (Tsing et al. 2024, 23). However, the challenge is to remain attentive to how the *planetary* is mutually constituted through multiple different scales—hence the focus on plural "worlds" or "patches" (Tsing et al. 2024, 26, 32). Going further, I also remain unconvinced of the productivity of planetary frames relative to global frames with respect to conceptualizing how things, practices, and relations move and transform across space. Both cases, I propose, suggest that scholars working toward more nuanced conceptions of *globalization* remain vital interlocutors for planetary thinkers (Moraru 2022, 112).

Accordingly, rather than simply "overwriting" the *global* with the *planetary* (Spivak 2003, 72), my suggestion would be to think these frames together. Dipesh Chakrabarty's work provides a productive means of doing this without reproducing the nature–culture dualism often implicit in planetary-global distinctions (Bauman 2014, 26). For Chakrabarty, the relationship between the *global* and the *planetary* is *dialectical* rather than binary (Chakrabarty 2021, 18, 80): (hegemonic) globalization has co-produced the conditions for climate crisis, which in turn has "disclosed" the *planetary* as a critique of the *global* (Elias and Moraru 2015, xx; Moraru 2022, 112). Even if, as Chakrabarty suggests, "the age of the global as such is ending," it remains imperative to "contemplate our own times [. . .] from [both] perspectives at once" (Chakrabarty 2021, 18, 85), not least because globalizing processes—and their fragmenting infrastructures—remain profoundly entangled with planetary formations (Bauman 2014, 66, 112).

Given the prevalence of global frames in the study of religion, it is striking that scholars—and matters—of religion remain somewhat marginal to debates on planetarity. One notable exception is Whitney Bauman, whose sustained engagement with planetary thinking situates religion as an important site of meaning-making and ethical transformation (Bauman 2014). Bauman's work complements the critical, interpretive, and speculative character of the *planetary* paradigm, particularly as it is invoked in environmental humanities (see also Bray et al. 2023; Bergmann et al. 2023). However, because previous research on religion and globalization has instead privileged empirical analysis geared toward describing and explaining social and material dynamics, the task of navigating the intersections of global and planetary frames remains a methodological challenge.

As a bridging point, I again invoke Anna Tsing, whose own trajectory, as a leading theorist of both *globalization* and *planetarity*, highlights the potential for continuity between these frameworks (Tsing 2000, 2005, 2009). Tsing's recent work—alongside Jennifer Deger, Alder Keleman Saxena, and Feifei Zhou—is deeply rooted in the recent literature on planetarity and embraces a wide array of empirical perspectives, consciously embracing the "epistemological tensions" between them (Tsing et al. 2024, 197). Simultaneously, in keeping with feminist epistemological perspectives, they prioritize "place-based" knowledge practices as a means of challenging the dominance of the planetary scale in Anthropocene research, invoking "what is actually happening in particular places" as a counterweight against abstract models and simplified projections (Tsing et al. 2024, 10, 24, 206). Thus, Tsing et al. offer a compelling methodology to researchers interested in how religion participates in and shapes the socio-techno-ecological processes that constitute global entanglements and planetary formations—an approach that enables engagement with both *global* and *planetary* frames, balancing empirical observation with theoretical critique.

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CONCLUSION

In this article, I have critically analyzed forty years of research on religion in a global frame, introducing a three-phase heuristic to trace conceptual transformations and enduring oversights. In the first phase, scholars developed systematizing theories of religion's role in globalization, whether as a constitutive or reactive force. The second phase advanced empirical accounts of how specific religious movements are transformed through diverse globalizing processes, sparking debates about whether religious globalization is best characterized by homogenization or heterogenization, deterritorialization or reterritorialization. Since the mid-2010s, as confidence in *globalization* as a conceptual frame has waned, third-phase scholarship has turned to the *global*—whether as an analytical lens or a classificatory object of critique—to advance more reflexive, polycentric, and longue durée approaches to religion's transboundary entanglements. Yet, this discursive-critical turn has also reinforced the field's long-standing neglect of material and socio-technical dynamics.

I argue that engagement with emerging research on (religious) infrastructure offers a vital corrective to this oversight by foregrounding infrastructures of religious globalization and by recognizing how religious infrastructures actively shape and sustain globalizing processes more broadly. This corrective is particularly urgent amid global infrastructural reordering and fragmentation, which not only influences how religion circulates and transforms but also provides an opportunity to uncover religion's active role in (re)making these arrangements.

I have also shown that infrastructures are entangled with planetary processes that exceed human designs and interventions. Accordingly, I propose that the planetary frame—thus far largely neglected by the study of religion—provides a useful counterpoint by foregrounding ecological interdependencies and human-nonhuman relations in an era of increasingly precarious planetary habitability. Rather than replacing the *global* with the *planetary*, these frames must be held in productive tension, moving beyond critique to examine religion's concrete entanglements with planet-traversing socio-techno-ecological processes.

Shortly before his death, Roland Robertson observed that interest in religion within globalization studies remains remarkably "slender" (Robertson 2022, 178). However, in times of so-called deglobalization and ecological crisis, it is important to recognize that religion is not merely affected by these dynamics but is a crucial site where they are reproduced, contested, and reconfigured, actively shaping emerging global and planetary futures. I conclude with a call for deeper engagement with religion in debates about globality and planetarity—not only because it warrants attention in its own right but also because, as James A. Beckford argued over two decades ago, "religion is 'good to think with' in relation to globalisation" (Beckford 2003, 106).

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